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ABSTRACT

Access is a journal published three or four times a year by Challenge for Change/Societe Nouvelle (CCSN). CCSN is an experimental program established by the Government of Canada as a cooperative effort between the National Film Board of Canada and certain of the Government's departments. Its purposes are to improve communications, create greater understanding, promote new ideas, and provoke social change. The seven major articles in this issue deal with: 1) portable video tape and the creation of regional consciousness in Appalachia; 2) citizen participation in Canadian cable (CATV) programing; 3) new functions for CATV; 4) principles and procedures of leadership for community change; 5) environmental education by films; 6) video tape recording as a tool of cross cultural communication; and 7) the use of video taping in the teaching of history. (PB)

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Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle Access

National Film Board of Canada

Number 11

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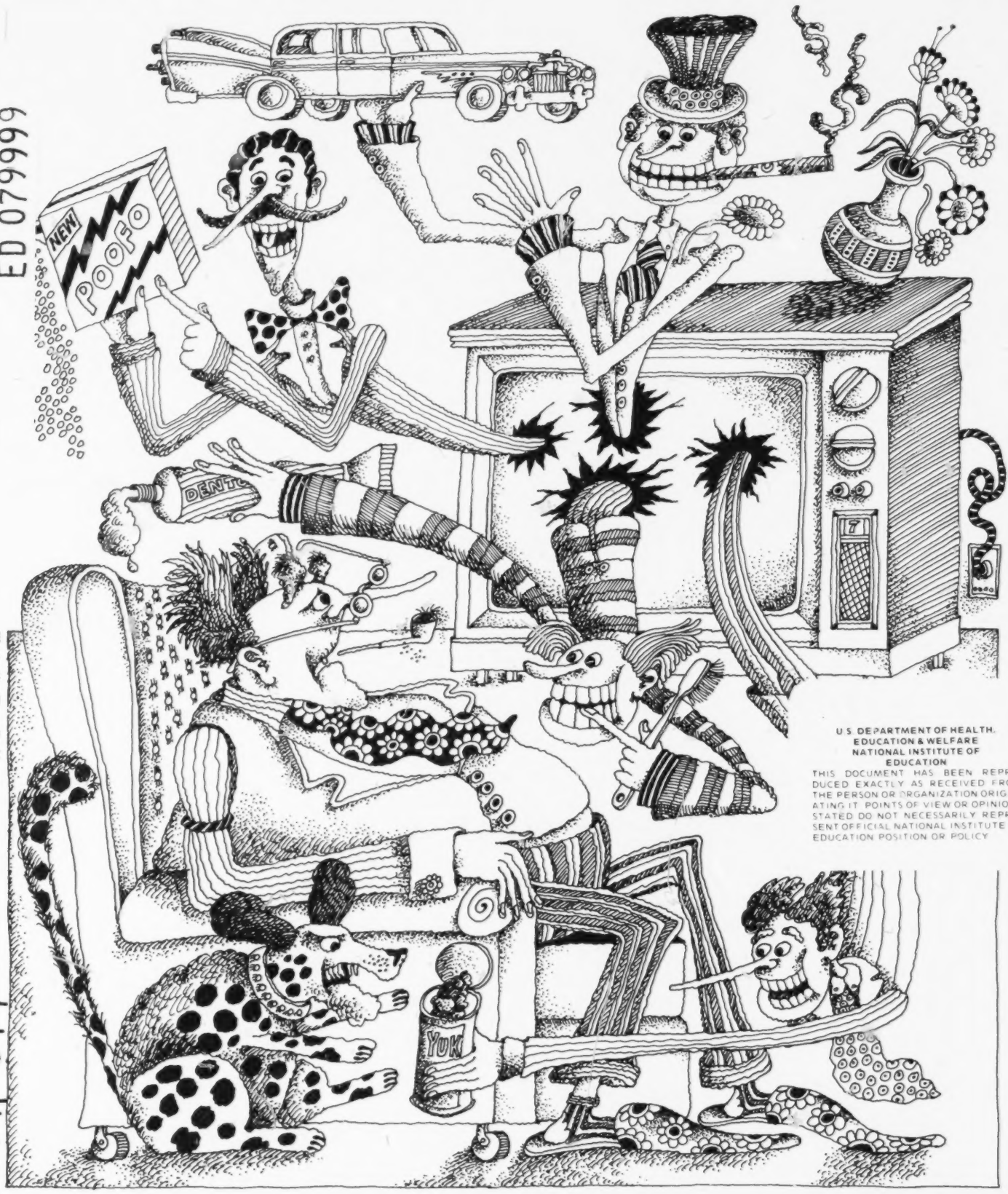

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Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle
Number 11
Spring 1973

Preview

Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle: a program designed to improve communications, create greater understanding, promote new ideas and provoke social change.

Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle is an experimental program established by the Government of Canada as a participation between the National Film Board of Canada and certain federal government departments and agencies, which now comprise: Agriculture, Communications, CMHC, National Health and Welfare, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Labour, Manpower and Immigration, Regional Economic Expansion and Secretary of State/ Citizenship. The program is responsible directly to the Secretary of State, via the Privy Council office.

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The first reaction to the Skyriver project from liberals I know in Anchorage was "Oh, isn't that great. Kennedy's going out to the villages. He's getting people to say these things and then he can influence or change the attitude of people in Juneau or Washington. He's advocating for the people."

Well, the more they found out about the program in action, the less I got a positive response from them. I finally figured out why: They felt very threatened by the process once they understood it because, if it's successful, it does away with the white advocate's role. It's direct action. The people advocate for *themselves* using this process.

Also, liberals (I mean small "l" liberals) have more confidence in government, I think, than do more conservative people.

It's a hard thing to say, but I really feel that well-meaning liberal types have done much more harm in rural Alaska than men who go up specifically and overtly to exploit. The people have subtle defense mechanisms against exploiters; they know how to handle them. But they can become very dependent on a liberal person or a progressive person, as they always have to qualify his actions by saying, "His heart's in the right place." So it's subtle but I think that a lot more harm than good has been done by the proliferation of liberally conceived programs . . .

Tim Kennedy

In the next issue of Access, *Tim Kennedy tells how the Skyriver project used film and videotape to help the Alaskan Eskimos learn to "advocate for themselves".*

The Living Newsletter – Portable Videotape and a Regional Spirit

Half-inch portable videotape equipment is beginning to provide a unique resource for education and communication in the Southern Appalachian mountains.[1] A region of America rich in a distinctive geography, history and culture all its own, it has been poorly represented and often buried in stereotypes by the traditional media. Long isolated by hills and hollers, mountain people have a rich background of oral learning and culture, but little access to formal media. The convenience and portability of half-inch video, however, has allowed us to provide a broadly based program of education and communication on an intimate and personal basis between hills, hollers, porches and homes of mountain people. Since the mountains are also heavily cabled, the tapes that are made and exchanged can also be exchanged throughout the region through cable TV systems.

An Alternative to Stereotypes

Appalachia's problems are varied and complex. Despite the national publicity and the highly touted government programs, little has changed over the past ten years. Most government and private programs have concentrated on industrial and natural resource development. People, as usual, have been ignored, mistreated or neglected. Also, along with the national publicity, exposure to dehumanizing stereotypes has increased, often creating severe conflict in mountain people's attempts to build pride in their heritage and culture. At a time when cries of outrage would follow a TV program which showed Blacks as lazy and shiftless, most TV programs still portray the mountaineer as lazy, backward, degenerate and shiftless. The American communications media still ridicule anything that is not acceptable to middle-class America or that threatens its established assumptions about life and culture. Although videotape does not offer a solution to this problem, it does allow another alternative for people who are accustomed to seeing degrading images of themselves on television.

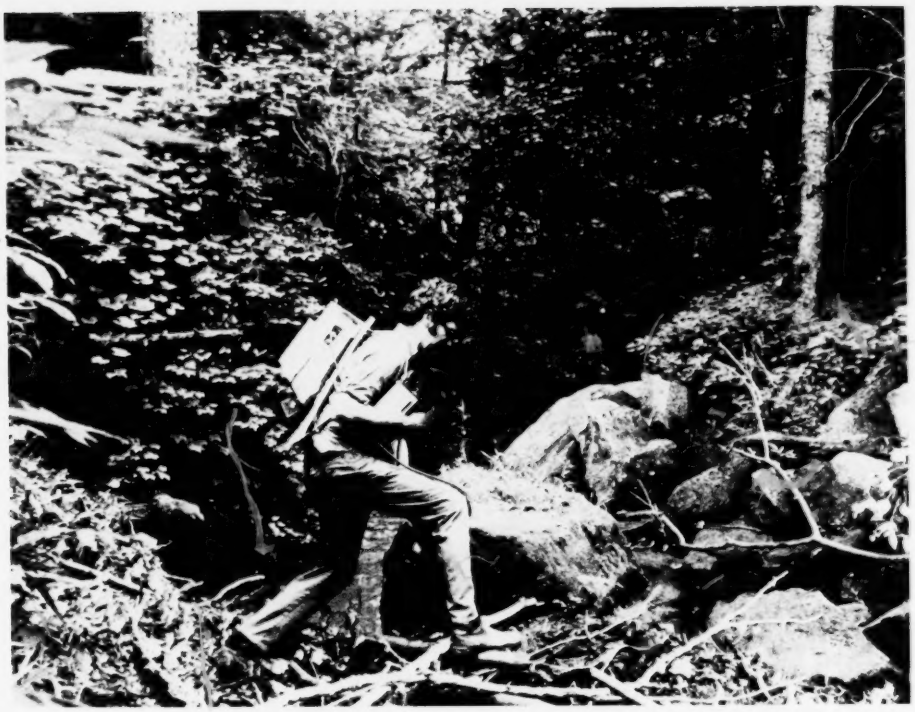
The video exchange has grown out of the work of the Highlander Research and Education Center (New Market, Tennessee) to develop techniques in adult education that center around problems of common concern to people in the Appalachian region. The educational principle behind such an exchange was perfectly expressed by a storekeeper in Blackey, Kentucky, who herself made a tape: "I've a feelin' that any kind of learnin' by adults will be incidental to their learnin' of something that they're vitally interested in. I'd just expect that more middle-aged coal miners have learned to read since they've been tryin' to find out about the black lung[2] benefits, than at any time in history. And some of those Black Lung Association newspapers are really good." Portable half-inch video is economical enough, and flexible enough to expand upon these learning principles by exchanging experiences and ideas among people who share vital interests and problems – in a sense it is a living newsletter for the mountain region.

A Man Can Speak for Himself

Fentress County (Tennessee) farmer Arden Franklin has a problem he's anxious to talk about. Strip miners, who take bulldozers and tear the topsoil and trees off Appalachian mountainsides to get the coal from under the dirt, are ruining the land around his farm. We visited him at his home with a Sony Portapak videotape outfit and first showed him some tapes that other mountain people who are concerned about strip mining had made. Franklin listened carefully, nodding in agreement and absorbing the words and experiences of people like himself. After watching the tapes, Franklin then made a tape himself, talking eloquently and at length about his problem and his concern.

We then put the Portapak in a back harness and, using batteries, climbed through the hills around his home to tape the strip mine damage and the beautiful valleys still threatened by the stripper's dozer. Franklin was free and comfortable, having confidence in the experience of other people he had seen on tape, and having been assured that his tape would reach other people in the mountains in the same way.

The following week, a group of mountain farmers and residents of coal camps gathered in Knoxville, Tennessee, to talk with TVA[3], whose policies on buying cheap coal have encouraged strip mining



Mike Clarke Photo Ted Carpenter

Photo Mike Clarke

in communities where these people live. The Portapak was there again, recording the TVA staff responding to the group, and recording a tour of TVA's Bull Run Steam Plant and an experimental site to try and reclaim stripped land. When the mountain people met in a workshop that evening to discuss what to do about stripping and TVA, they watched their sessions with TVA played back on the video. They also listened to the quiet and earnest eloquence of Arden Franklin's tape – a man like themselves talking back to people like himself about an Appalachian problem.[4]

To Politicians – and to the People

The above exchanges are a valid and moving educational program in themselves. However, a second feature of such exchanges is that they blend beautifully with the unique resources of cable TV and other forms of public dialogue. The strip-mining tapes are being edited and sent to Congressman Ken Hechler and Senator Fred Harris in Washington, who are sponsoring strip-mine legislation. They are also being shown on Appalachian cable TV systems that are anxious to provide material of local interest to their subscribers. The Arden Franklin tape alone – with minimal editing in the scenes around his farm and with a moving song written by a member of an anti-strip-mine group – is itself a half-hour tape of quiet eloquence and absorbing interest, which can be shown on cable TV systems throughout the region. The tapes are also a ready resource to closed-circuit systems on campuses and in public schools that are trying to provide an Appalachian curriculum.[5]

The significance of this project for cable TV and closed-circuit systems goes beyond an easy resource for programming. Anyone can make tapes, but this project, having an educational principle and a basis of exchange that is valid in its own right, provides cable and closed-circuit systems with a resource of experience and ideas ideally suited to their unique situation. What cable and closed systems provide is an intimacy and access to a closed and knowable audience – a system that can afford to serve a small group of its audience as well as a large

group. Such systems can afford to relate information at the problem level to that portion of its audience which shares a vital interest in that problem.

Programming Suited to Cable

Too many cable and closed-circuit systems are unable to use their potential because they have no access to programming suited to their unique situation. Unfortunately, too much stress is being put on the closed-cassette industry that will provide "canned" cassettes of old movies, TV shows and current entertainers – simply a frozen rehash of the same media resources we've always had at the national level. Such cassettes are hardly a creative approach to "local" origination and do little to explore the unique potential of local intimacy and a known audience that cable and closed-circuit have.

The video exchange in Appalachia uses the Portapak as a closed system that, in itself, mirrors the intimacy, access and economy of cable and closed circuit. It explores the unique dimensions of such systems in an educational yet personal framework which is more intimate, if less professional, and is able to respond to local and small group needs.

Because of our positive approach to cable TV systems, the Alternate Media Center at New York University has helped us by providing a Portapak outfit and some tape for our work. They also are keeping an Appalachian library to safeguard copies of our more important tapes. Mostly, however, we have been operating on a shoestring, able to keep a Portapak and two editing decks going by occasional work with universities and public agencies. We hope to develop financial independence so that we can continue the living-newsletter exchange over cable TV.

Respect for the People

The tapes we are developing are carefully motivated. Under no circumstances are we trying to be "teachers", "missionaries" or "film-makers" taking a curriculum, message or other form of "enlightenment" to people in the mountains. We assume that people in the region have a ready access to experience, language and ideas when it comes to their own vital interests. We assume, too, that they are willing to share this experience through tape with someone like themselves. We never tape anyone who has not viewed a tape of someone else first. It is always clear that, if someone makes a tape, it too will circulate to other interested people in the mountains. Anyone who makes a tape also sees it played back and has a chance to evaluate and criticize his own statements. In this sense we motivate problem-centered dialogues among people in a region, instead of showing curriculums or films. We create a disciplined exchange that allows people to generate the material for their own learning.

When we arrived in Blackey, Kentucky, we stopped at Joe and Gaynell Begley's store. Joe is part Cherokee, and he and his wife viewed a tape of a Cherokee-Choctaw Tennessee farmer who talks of what he learned in the Depression and his views on education. Gaynell then made a tape, sitting on the front porch of her store, about her experience with other Blackey parents in trying to rebuild their community school after it was destroyed by fire. Her tape has been shown to other groups who are interested in working with schools in their communities, and those groups in turn have made tapes for others to see. Some of these tapes will be edited into a one-hour, intimate look into education and the schools in Appalachia, which will be made available to schools and cable TV systems in the region.

True to the Oral Tradition

The variations on the above exchanges are endless. In much the same way as the oral learning tradition has been carried on in the mountains for generations, we are using tape to record the experiences of older people in the mines, the union struggles, the poverty program, or the Appalachian ghettos of major cities. These tapes are then played back to younger people to preserve and expand on the experience that has gone before them. An early union activist in Harlan, Kentucky, taped his experiences. We took his tape and played it back to old union activists in Cabin Creek, West Virginia – in their homes and over their TV sets – and they in turn made tapes of their experiences with the unions. Portions of these tapes were then shown to young people at a Mountain Heritage workshop. Some of the region's colleges are interested in these

Photo Mike Clarke

Photo Ted Carpenter

tapes for closed-circuit use in Appalachian studies, and the material is being edited for a cable TV showing on union history in Appalachia.

I Can Do It Myself

Often, people in the mountains are beginning to operate the equipment themselves. A young man taped his dad talking about his experiences as a boxcar wanderer in the 1930's. A member of an anti-strip-mining group taped scenes of a strip pit near his home. Mountain people in workshops have begun to handle and experiment with the machinery. Different people are beginning to get involved with the use of such simple and non-intimidating machinery. Children interviewed each other for a Model Cities tape shown locally on the Cookeville, Tennessee, CATV system.

The ability to be non-intimidating is an important part of using half-inch video. We rarely have to make concessions to complex lighting or sound arrangements. A hand-held camera and microphone, and available light, are all that is usually necessary. By using a radio frequency modulator in the deck, a small TV set is used to monitor the camera work: instead of looking through the camera at a person, the camera is held in the lap, with an occasional glance at the TV monitor. People get to talk with a person that way, not to a camera, and the technique avoids the traditionally intimidating, elusive and detached cameraman. Like everyone else, the man with a camera must be a participant. Such ease of technique does not hold people up to complicated standards or studio situations. We can work with people where they are in a way that is comfortable and natural to them.

Portable VTR Is Friendly

The educational value of this kind of exchange is strengthened by some factors unique to half-inch video. A major factor, of course, is portability so that tapes can be made where people are most comfortable, and where the problems are, instead of in cold, isolated studios that intimidate anyone but the professional. Simplicity and economy mean that awkward film crews and professionals are not necessary, giving the opportunity for community people to relax and begin to use the medium for themselves. The immediacy of the record and playback are also central, making video a tool of the moment, adaptable and changeable and viewable while it is being used – no time-consuming development and editing time to get results. When people can see themselves played back immediately, they get a greater sense of their own and other people's involvement, a greater intimacy with the medium.

Video also gives a detachment and a legitimacy to the experiences of people who make tapes. It is often electric, the kind of response people in the mountains have to seeing themselves and community people like themselves coming out over a TV screen – making sense and striking home about important regional issues through what is assumed to be a legitimate medium, the television. At the same time, the viewing process gives people who are engaged in problem-solving activities the chance to step back and look at what they and other people in the region are saying and doing. It is intimate because it is a part of themselves and their work, but also detached and able to be played back and viewed over again through a TV screen. The opportunities for self-criticism, self-evaluation and self-education have not been lost on mountain people.

New Value for an Old Tradition

The mountains have long been an elusive and complex region. Its people have been proud and protective of the experience and learning that are unique to the mountain way of life. The oral traditions of father-to-son and group-to-group exchanges of experience and learning have been preferred and trusted more by mountain people, as with many other people with unique and valued traditions. Videotape finally provides a medium that retains the value and legitimacy of the kind of learning that comes from experience and that is locally or regionally valuable. Videotape not only has provided a framework for dialogue and oral learning that is respected by people in the mountains, but has also added some dimensions of its own that expand the constituency and framework for fundamental problem-solving.

Ted Carpenter and Mike Clark
c/o Video Maker
132 South Washington
Cookville, Tennessee 38501

[1] Appalachia is not a group of states, but the mountainous area of several states. Southern Appalachia includes parts of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. A "regional sense" does not necessarily conform to political boundaries.

[2] Black lung is a disease that affects many miners after years of working in the mines.

[3] TVA – the Tennessee Valley Authority was set up originally to protect and conserve the Tennessee River Valley.

[4] Over the past five years, most large companies have been purchased by oil conglomerates in an attempt to corner the world supply of fossil fuels.

These oil companies are gradually moving their mining interests into the Northwest and Southwest where huge beds of coal lie close to the surface in Montana, Wyoming, the Dakotas, New Mexico and Arizona.

Because of this, Highlander staff and friends have begun to develop new contacts among Westerners who may soon be affected by strip mining in these areas.

[5] *Music for social change*

A workshop on Mountain Movement Music attracted 35 musicians to Highlander during October for a four-day session. The workshop was held for song-leaders, song-writers, singers, festival organizers and persons interested in using music as an educational tool.

Mountain musicians who took part in the labor struggles of the 20's and 30's shared their experiences with younger musicians who are active today with issues such as welfare rights, union reform, strip mining, women's rights, and occupational health reform.

Working sessions covered such areas as song-writing, song-leading, using music in community activities, the need for new kinds of songs, and the ways songs can bridge a gap between past and present social problems.

The workshop was directed by staff members Guy Carawan and Earl Gilmore and board member Shelva Thompson. Sections were videotaped and the tapes are now being shown in various parts of the mountains to community groups who were unable to send representatives.

[6] Appalachian education has been described as "deprived, depressed, disadvantaged and underdeveloped". There is a move among some Appalachian educators, however, to turn this disadvantage into an asset, restoring the oral tradition to a place of honor and introducing studies in making Appalachia "a land supporting its people".

Ted Carpenter Photo Mike Clarke

Hello Channel X?
I'd Like to Hear Tape 25

Citizens Participate in Cable Programming

Beloeil, near Montreal has 4,000 families on cable. Pointe Gatineau near Ottawa has slightly over 5,000 and has been developing quite a lot of local cable programming. Mont Laurier, Quebec, is an active but isolated community about 150 miles from Montreal; its 1,600 cable subscribers represent 95 per cent of the population.

Last fall, each center undertook a ten-day experiment in Selectovision, involving participation of citizens, the local cable station and Vidéographe, the Montreal video workshop originated by Société Nouvelle and now financed by the Quebec Government.

Robert Forget and Mousse Guernon of Vidéographe tell about the experiments.

Selectovision is, in principle, a simple idea. It works this way: You use one channel for an animator and you free up at least one channel to broadcast tapes.

Cable subscribers get a notice in the mail, announcing the experiment and containing a flier with a list of tapes – the names and a brief description of each. We supply the tapes, about 80 of them, and about 50 of the tapes we used in these experiments were made at Vidéographe.

During the experiment, Selectovision broadcast 10 to 12 hours a day for 10 days. At Beloeil it was 2 p.m. to 2 a.m. daily.

Behind the animator on the first channel is a large board. Subscribers phone in to the animator and he writes their requests on the board.

Meanwhile, on the second channel, a tape is running. When it is finished the animator checks the board to see which tape is most in demand – and that goes on the second channel. While the second tape is playing, people may call in and give commentary on the first one. So the producer of that tape, if he's listening, gets feedback. There might be quite a discussion. And, of course, there are new requests coming in to be added to the "scoreboard".

In some homes, people set up two TV sets so they can follow both ends of the experiment. People without cable visit a friend to share in the experience... and so on.

In the Beloeil experiment, we averaged about 320 calls a day; at Pointe Gatineau we averaged 342. At Mont Laurier, we averaged 372 calls with about one-third the cable population of the other centers.

There are reasons for that. Mont Laurier is an active community, removed from big cities. But perhaps more important, we had four channels operating instead of two. If you consider that tapes average 30 minutes, it meant that a new tape could be started every 10 minutes. We came closer to offering our ideal of "service on demand".

I should add that some of the most popular tapes were not those made at Vidéographe. One, called *Drug Alert*, was screened fifteen times in Beloeil and twelve times in Mont Laurier. It was a ten-minute tape with no titles, no editing, made by an ex-addict who is paid by Kiwanis to go around to schools talking about his experiences. I think a lot of people dialled to have that tape shown to their children. It speaks about an important issue, but it is very moralistic.

Broadcast television doesn't allow for word-of-mouth popularity. People say, "Did you see that last night? No? Oh, too bad." With Selectovision they can say, "Ask for it; it's very good."

This important difference is why we welcomed participation in the Selectovision experiments. It's a long, slow process, helping people recognize that they don't have to be passive receivers of TV programming, that they can take an active part. They were able to do that with Selectovision by helping choose the tapes. Perhaps more important, they were able to see broadcasts made by people like themselves, people who had something to say and had actually mastered the techniques of half-inch videotape.

Mind you, in each case it was only a ten-day experiment and then "back to normal". It costs money to keep two channels open with an animator until 2 o'clock in the morning. People in the area are responsible for preparing the catalogue. The cable owner handles publicity. These are expenses that the cable owner is not accustomed to. People there have to persuade him.

But it seems to be happening – we are receiving requests to repeat the experiment in other areas. Perhaps some communities will persuade the cable owner to re-open Selectovision for a longer period.

Even if that doesn't happen, we are happy with the follow-up in the places we've tried it. In Beloeil, young people have come in to the station, wanting to set up a program. Kids phone in for answers to homework problems.

In Mont Laurier, local programming has changed since the experiment. There are more community project leaders wanting to make programs. They want more "phone-in" feedback-type programs. Young people are getting more involved there, more serious, interested in broader programming with more impact. The non-commercial tapes seem to have made their point.

The future? Who knows? As I say, we have more invitations to repeat the experiment from cable system to cable system. Maybe this will turn out to be a way to circulate tapes – I don't know.

Robert Forget
Mousse Guernon
Vidéographe
1604 St. Denis
Montreal 129

P.S.
A mobile low-powered transmitter is *really* the tool for community TV!
R.F.

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How Goes It, Vidéographe?

In *Access* No. 8, a lengthy article described this innovative Société Nouvelle venture. Since the end of September, Vidéographe has had other funding and is into what director Robert Forget calls "Phase II".

At present he describes VTR as "still a toy medium". A priority for the group of seven at Vidéographe is the earnest pursuit of technical developments that will make video equipment simple for citizens to use, always bearing in mind that modification costs must be related to the relatively low cost of the machine.

"We want to eliminate the continuing need for technicians as much as possible, so that citizens can really have direct access."

In recent months they have been working with technical people in automating the editing circuit developed earlier. Work continues on the development of an animation camera.

Access to viewing is important too – so Vidéographe is open twenty-four hours a day with a vidéothèque and cassettes right inside the front door. Project submissions to the program committee continue to arrive in a heavy flow.

Community groups are using the facilities more than they used to but tend to be particularly interested in the editing facilities. According to Forget, "They're slightly allergic to our strict planning requirements. They want a Portapak for six months, or a large monitor. We'd be prepared to let them out for a few days at a time if they can tell us when they want them. Our insistence on planning is irritating for them. But after all – a Portapak in an animator's car for three months is like giving him a second car.

"In spite of these difficulties we do get many requests for use of editing facilities and they come from a wide geographic radius. There are many cameras around Quebec but few editing facilities. People come from Lac St. Jean with a bunch of tapes and edit here. Vidéographe projects have priority but actually twice as many projects have been *finished* here as were initiated in Vidéographe. Often we don't even know what they're doing. They come in – work for three nights in the wee hours of the morning and go back again!"

There is a tremendous team spirit among the Vidéographe people, and continuing enthusiasm for their work. Forget puts it simply: "In the process of doing the first phase, we found new things to do and we want to do them."

Elizabeth Prinn

Cable Can – and Will – Deliver More than Programs What's It to Be?

"The problem of participating in the definition of the future is not merely a problem of the poor, the inarticulate and the isolated. Highly paid executives, wealthy professionals, extremely articulate intellectuals and students – all at one time or another feel cut off from the power to influence the directions and pace of change. Wiring them into the system, making them a part of the guidance machinery of the society is the most critical political task of the coming generation."
Alvin Toffler
from his book, Future Shock

The opportunity to make "participatory democracy" a working reality exists now. We possess the means to have the best-informed technical electorate since the Greek city-state. We have the best means for getting feedback from a constituency since we grew too big for the town meeting.

But decisions being made now will determine whether our new communications capabilities bring us greater democratization and decentralization or whether they become the exclusive playthings of an ever-more-powerful, wealthy and untouchable bureaucratic elite. Right now, our future hangs rather precariously on what happens to cable systems. Participation now is needed to ensure it will be technically possible in the future.

Cable Systems Are Not "Broadcast Undertakings"

The recent move by the Saskatchewan government to take control of that province's cable systems was greeted with cries of "governments can't run broadcast undertakings" and "opportunities for propagandizing, NDP-style".

What the uproar demonstrates best is that few Canadians yet understand the nature of a cable system.

In essence, cable systems are not broadcast undertakings – even if it is the CRTC (Canadian Radio-Television Commission) that is currently charged with regulating them. Cable systems are in fact more like public utilities and common carriers, having more characteristics in common with BC Tel than with CBC.

True, the reason they came into existence was to bring in distant television signals. Rooftop antennas were always rusting or blowing off. So someone got the bright idea twenty years ago of putting up one community antenna. Then every household that wanted to pay the fee could be wired into it. Today Canada is the most cabled nation in the world.

But a distant television signal is only one of many things that a cable system can transmit. Any point on the system can in fact be the point of origin for signals of all kinds – TV signals, radio signals, voice transmission, computer data.

Cable as Community Information Network

One of the first uses of this closed-circuit system has been the development of "community TV" transmissions by the owners of the cable systems. And this is the area in which community action groups have so far concentrated their efforts on access and participation. There are other uses however, which have little or nothing to do with either programming or conventional broadcasting: These are two-way, international, on-demand information systems that, in primitive form at least, are possible over cable today.

In 1967 Pat Hindley and I became involved in the design of RAVEN (Radio and Visual Education Network) precisely to provide an interactive system for the Indian villages of coastal BC. Now, using two-way radio and portable videotape recorders, they have a private system for getting answers to their questions and access to leaders and officials when they need it.

An urban telephone network with a cable system and possible computer hookup offers the possibility of a far more sophisticated tool for meeting some of the average citizen's information needs.

What Does Broadcast Leave Out?

I am not concerned with most of the information exchanges that take place in a city, nor with stock quotations, real estate values, commodity availability. The networks to handle these are well-established and will in all probability be among the first to benefit from the efficiencies promised by new technologies. We are concerned rather with the information exchanges for which channels are non-existent or inadequate, which have been neglected by existing media, and which stand to benefit last from technological innovation.

With our present communications systems we can all find out what brand of toothpaste will give us the brightest teeth. As a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult to avoid finding out. By comparision, it takes considerable time and effort to find out:

what your rights are when the landlord threatens to evict you;

which bus will get you where you want to go;

whether you need a lawyer for your divorce action;

where and how and when to get an abortion;

how to get a job in your field or where to go for retraining for another;

how to apply for Medical Insurance benefits;

how to register a non-profit society;

what the planned zoning laws are for your neighborhood... and on and on and on.

How Could Cable Put It In?

The proliferation of Information Centers across the country testifies to the need. Some of the queries they handle require person-to-person contacts and exchanges. Many of them do not. Some of them can be handled by existing telephone links; others can be greatly facilitated by a remote visual response capability; some tasks could be handled best with access to an on-line computer terminal.

Now, cable systems are critical to all this, since the coaxial cable provides, or will provide in metropolitan areas, the channel capacity to make new and additional services possible. And some of them will be implemented next year, and more the year after that.

Last August, eight of the nation's largest

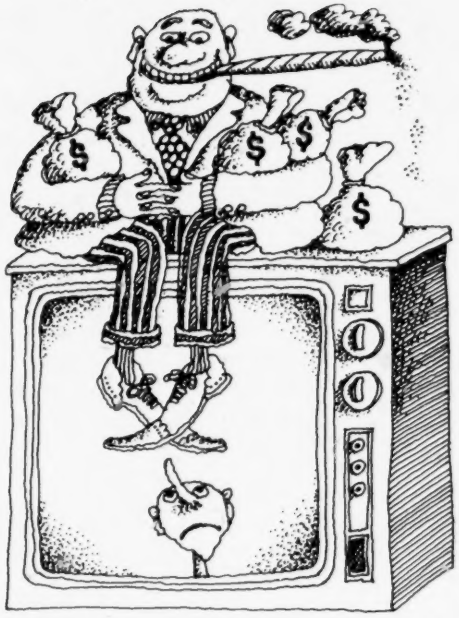


Illustration Tony Parkhouse

cable systems formed a consortium called Broadband Communications Networks, Ltd. According to the Financial Post (Aug. 26), Broadband's purpose is to "study some of the new services being suggested for cable TV and to decide which show enough profitability to try out as pilot projects."

With additions to the existing systems, signals can be sent out of a household on the circuit as well as into it. This gives rise to the possibility, for example, of citizens registering an immediate Yes or No on an opinion poll about neighborhood pubs... ordering a pair of shoes from a TV screen display... expressing approval or disapproval of a proposal for a new shopping center... transferring money into or out of a bank account.

Profitability the Deciding Factor?

A home-owner can arrange to have his house monitored for burglars while he's away. Meters can be read automatically, lights and appliances turned on and off, a personalized newspaper printed in the den, and a host of other services and transactions made possible as computer-telecommunications links become more numerous, efficient, and economical.

Now, what concerns me – and I hope will concern increasing numbers of Canadians – is that some of these services will begin in the next five years.

Which ones? The shoe buying? The banking? The meter reading? Why those, of all the ones that are possible? Because that's where cable system owners decide the most money can be made? And because the rest of us were too uninformed or unconcerned to realize what was happening?

The critical fact is that, once a decision is taken and capital is invested, it will take a decade or more before we can change it. It takes at least that long for a system to depreciate to the point where it is worth replacing.

I hope that considerations other than profit alone will in part determine the shape of these future systems.

The Late, Late "Little Black Box"

Premier Cablevision Ltd., the public company that controls Victoria Cablevision and Vancouver's largest system, is a member of the consortium. One of the pilot projects they promise to try out in BC next year, in conjunction with Optical Systems of California, is "the little black box". You get this attached to your TV set, and guess what? For a fee, you get your choice of packaged programming for the evening – without commercials.

I am told by suppliers of the program packages that there is a nearly inexhaustible supply of never-released, second-rate Hollywood movies waiting to come to you over your little black box.

While the industry plans for future profitability, a group at BC's Simon Fraser University under the direction of Pat Hindley, associate professor of communications studies, has been concentrating on the implications of new developments in media for public information needs. The research, supported by the Canada Council, has identified three "problem" areas that require priority attention if the potential of the new technologies is to be tapped to meet social and political needs. These areas include: 1) industry regulation and citizen access; 2) industry revenues and support of public information systems; 3) identification and cataloguing of information needs.

Industry Regulation and Citizen Access

So far, interaction between community groups and cable system operators has been confined to programming and production. Experience in this area has uncovered some of the tensions and difficulties that have to be resolved if community programming is to flourish and if the way is to be smoothed for other types of development. In some ways it is unfortunate, perhaps, that the first community cable system interactions took place over "programming", since it has evoked attitudes on both sides associated with traditional broadcasting roles.

One persistent difficulty has been that cable system operators are under no legal obligation to provide this channel for community programming, or to allow any public group access to it. They do it out of their own goodwill and perhaps because the CRTC has strongly recommended it. In the US, on the other hand, it has recently been ruled that anyone who produces a videotape has a legal right to have it broadcast, unless it is libellous or obscene. The Black population there is most sensitive to the problems of public access to privately operated broadcasting operations. Short of nationalization of cable systems, as Saskatchewan has recently done, strong measures will be required to rescue the citizen from his current role as supplicant, dependent for access on the goodwill and affability of the community channel manager. This principle of *right* of access, instead of *favor* granted by the cable system operator, will become more important as the uses for cable multiply.

"Let the Professionals Decide"

This is why regulation of cable systems at present as broadcast undertakings is having some undesirable psychological effects for future development. The cable system operator has been placed in the same position as professional broadcasters have been in for years – as arbiters of public information, charged with screening information before it reaches the public. How fine the mesh he uses varies with the system – and the personality of the production manager.

When we were first trying to sell the RAVEN idea, a CBC official replied to our comments about native people being able to make their own videotapes and present issues from their own point of view: "But you can't do that. The public can't have access to the airwaves like that. I

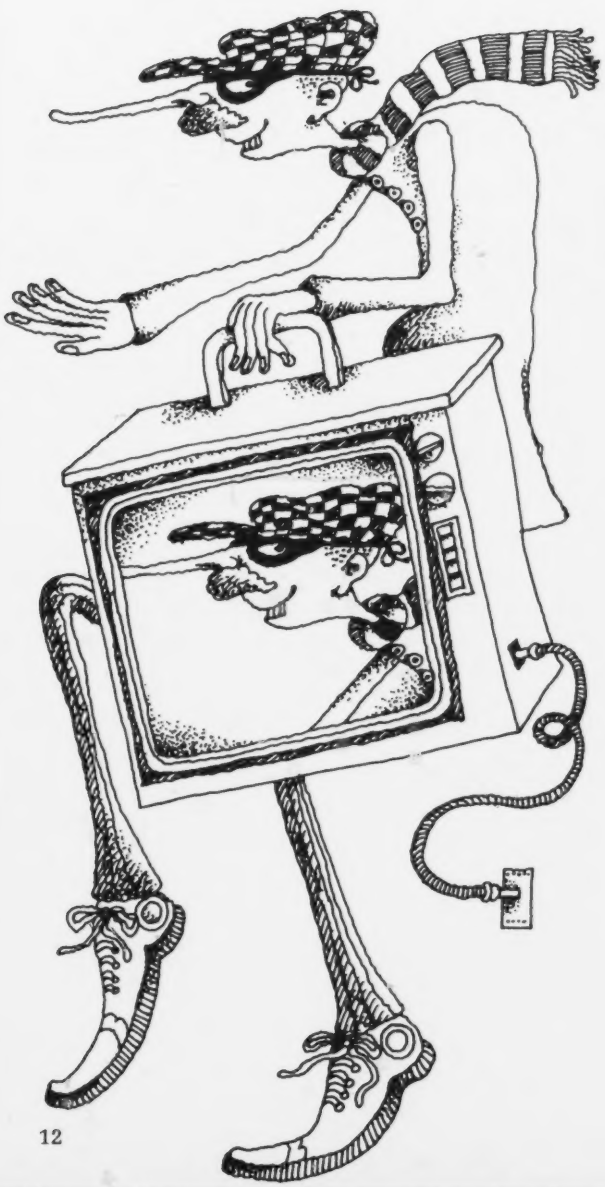


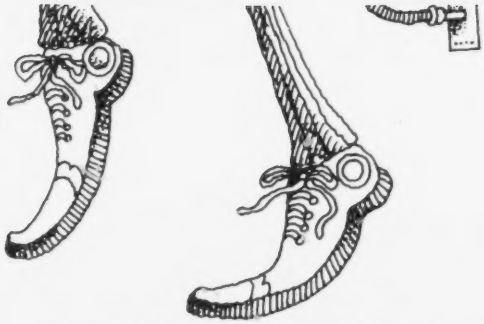
Illustration Tony Parkhouse

mean you'd get all kinds of one-sided propaganda. It's our responsibility, as public broadcasters, to see that a balanced view is presented." That's a paraphrase that I've developed; but the import of the message was clear: Hands off, we professionals decide what you, the great unwashed, shall see and hear, and we alone, with our professional training, can be trusted with the public airwaves.

Whether broadcasters ever lived up to the onerous responsibility has been the subject of repeated debate. The point is that what may have been necessary in the days when communication channels were scarce will be decreasingly the case in the future. It was possible to censor books when there were only a dozen printing presses in all of Europe. It's next to impossible in the Western World today. In the future, the "balanced view" in broadcasting will be ensured less by professional arbitration than by public access to multiple channels of information and all points of view...

Cable Modeled on Telephone Systems...
The CRTC in its policy statement of July 16, 1971, made a cogent argument why cable must be regulated as part of the broadcasting industry in order to safeguard the present Canadian broadcasting system, "the single system" of the Broadcast Act. It is unfortunate, however, from the psychological point of view, that cable system operators have been placed in a position similar to that of conventional broadcasters. It would probably have been much healthier for future development if they viewed themselves not as arbiters of community information systems but as leasing wires over which the public would send messages of its own devising. This model of a telephone system provides at present more fuel for the imagination than does our experience of professional broadcasting.

This attitude of the "professional broadcaster" on the one side handicaps the development of open-access systems. On the other, the attitude of the average citizen toward the TV set equally thwarts the efforts of community media groups. We are all accustomed to receiving entertainment, or whatever, prepared for the



many by the few. We are used to passively accepting the weekly menu, getting our doses of information and documentaries at the times prescribed by professional broadcasters.

... Or Imitators of Broadcast TV

Much of community programming channels shuffles along in these well-worn ruts, offering centralized one-way broadcasts filling a specific number of hours each day. But the need now is for communications systems that are interactive, responsive to individual and group requests for information and access at the time they need it. Cable systems could provide far more efficient and adequate systems for an urban population if we could all outgrow our perceptions of TV sets as entertainment "goggle boxes" and see them as information machines as well.

Small pilot efforts, using the telephone system and cable stations in the "off-hours", perhaps in conjunction with information centers, might be a way, both to provide effective information services and to start to work on our attitudes toward the "goggle box" in preparation for the computer terminal and interactive, on-line information systems. The greatest immediate value of such pilot efforts may be in alerting more of the public *before* all the decisions about our communications future have been made.

Industry Revenues and Support of Public Information Systems

Cable is a profitable business, and it is a "rapid growth" industry, predicted to maintain that status for the next ten years. Four Canadian cable companies are public, publishing annual reports and offering shares for public subscription. Premier Cablevision, which owns the Vancouver systems and systems in York, Ontario, and Victoria, BC, has revenues well in excess of $1 million *every month*. As the CRTC sees it, they are making this at the expense of Canadian broadcasting stations and are being called upon to pay these stations for the program materials they are taking off the air and selling to their subscribers.

From another point of view, and for historical reasons too lengthy to go into here, cable systems form natural monopolies in the communities they serve. As they move into types of services usually associated with common carriers (the telephone systems) and public utilities (power and light), other restrictions on their profits and reinvestment will become necessary. So far, the money derived from communities in subscription fees has gone to build sizeable cable and/or broadcasting empires, with companies having holdings in Europe and increasingly in the United States. This use of revenues from Canadian communities is in marked contrast to what happens when the community itself owns the cable system, as in Campbell River, BC. There, all $200,000 in annual revenue is ploughed back into the system itself and supports the community-run informational and educational programming services.

What Does the Community Stand to Gain?

Public information services in most metropolitan areas, as well as citizens' programming groups, struggle along from OFY grant to LIP grant, uncertain of their futures, relying on unpaid volunteer labor or on idealistic young people who do not yet have financial responsibilities. One of the tasks for future regulation of cable systems, unless the move toward nationalization taken by Saskatchewan is universally followed or duplicate cable systems are allowed, will be for some equitable return from a public utility to the community that supports it.

Saskatchewan moved early in its cable development to ensure that revenues would be ploughed back into the province from which they were derived. There are no sizeable cable undertakings in that province yet. One of the intentions expressed by the Saskatchewan officials responsible for the takeover was to ensure that the rural areas as well as the urban would benefit from cable services. In effect, they hoped that urban cable systems would be profitable enough to subsidize, at least partially, areas of the province where profit would not be a sufficient motive for development. Saskatchewan probably does not have a sufficient urban-based population to support a province-wide system without government subsidy. The provinces that would have such sizeable urban base, like BC, are already so heavily cabled that a takeover may prove to be prohibitively expensive, even if the parties in power decide nationalization is in the best interests of the public.

What Saskatchewan seems to be doing, however, is to be seeking the means to provide an economic base of support for needed public services. The recent announcement by the Premier, of the establishment of a "citizen enquiry" line, is most interesting in this context. The service will handle not only government enquiries, but information of the "survival" kind outlined earlier in this paper. It seems to reinforce the indications that the Saskatchewan government is starting from an awareness of public needs, and is preparing to move to meet them with whatever technologies can be made available.

Identification and Cataloguing of Public Information Needs

This involves establishing priorities for community information needs, along a number of *axes*. One of them is "survival", an evaluation of how important a specific information need is in terms of coping with an urban environment. Another important one is an analysis of the geographical area over which a given piece of information remains useful: This can forestall some duplication of effort when information remains valid and relevant over large areas and for a number of communities. Such analysis can also help in the identification of what constitutes a "community", for common information purposes.

As anyone who has tried to deal with community programming is aware, we have in our metropolitan areas a hodge-podge of cable systems with boundaries that bear no relationship to municipal jurisdiction, neighborhoods or "community" in any sense of the term. Toronto is cut up like a jig-saw puzzle. In one suburb of Vancouver, the municipal hall lies within the boundaries of one cable

system, while ninety per cent of the residents live in another. The CRTC has given permission to the municipal hall system to "network" for community programming – not with the system serving the residents, but with yet another Vancouver system. Consequently, programming from the city's council meetings or from the hospital and community center cannot be received by its residents. Bicycling tapes is hardly feasible since the systems use different brands of equipment. Attempts at "community" programming under circumstances such as these become exercises in futility or at best in irrelevance.

During this month's civic election, candidates' groups from one municipality had to turn down offers to use the cable system, because they were aware that they could not reach a large block of their constituency this way. They had to rely exclusively on the traditional all-candidates' meeting, with the problems of low voter turnout that method entails in December – even in "Beautiful BC".

Untangling the Snarl – A Priority

So, rationalization of community boundaries and insistence on the necessary technical and licensing adjustments is one of the priority tasks for citizens who would try to make cable an effective community tool. The best programming talent in the world cannot overcome organizational obstacles that separate a community from its nerve centers. Such definitions of community, and proposals for separate systems and/or interlocking networks with other municipalities and areas, will have to come from residents themselves. The CRTC is too far removed from the problem and too occupied with procedural and economic considerations involving Canadian broadcasting as a whole to enter in any detail into analysis of this sort. So far, the voices that have spoken most loudly and clearly on requests for networking and community programming licences have been those of the cable system operators. Their motivations are less often the good of the community than economy of operation. This analysis of community information priorities may help to undo some of the organizational weaknesses inherited from the past. Hopefully, it will also help to shape the decisions made about our communications futures.

What Do We Want These Systems to Do?

Presently, we have what have been unflatteringly but perhaps accurately termed, the "technocrats" enamored of the machines, designing elaborate systems than can do... endless numbers of things, without much concern about what it would be most necessary or desirable to do. Prototype home information systems in the States are being established or planned, many of them apparently under technocratic direction. This is the mentality, some have said, that launched Anik. The satellite is a sophisticated, efficient piece of equipment, a sort of monument in the sky that probably does very well what hardly anybody wanted it to do: inundate the North with powerful signals from the South.

So now is the time to decide what we want our communications systems to do – on the local, regional, provincial and national levels. What are the priorities? Which of these could or might be better served by new techniques? Over what geographical dispersion? When we can answer these questions, then, and only then, are we ready to design the systems. The race is on. The systems are being designed without the answers, without even asking the questions.

Can we provide at least some of them in time to feed into the design of the systems or at least raise the questions that might slow down the decision-making about our communications future?

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West Vancouver, BC

The Laboratory Becomes the Power System

Delegates at the First Atlantic Regional Community Leadership Laboratory, held at the Atlantic Christian Training Center in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, had an opportunity to learn principles and procedures of community change when they suddenly found themselves victims of an oppressive system. The staff, comprised of four Canadian community development workers, three human relations trainers, and myself as coordinator, established the laboratory as a self-contained system. We built in an authority structure that placed us in positions of prestige and privilege. We operated with a set of values that we had constructed. Sanctions and delegate privileges were determined exclusively by us, as were lines of communication.

The delegates ranged from volunteers to agency executives, coming from remote villages of Newfoundland and Labrador as well as from the urban centers of Nova Scotia. Given this distance and strangeness, and because this was a ten-day lab, the first five sessions were spent in T-Groups, whose task was to build a trust community. The objective, beyond that of learning how to build community in the "here and now", was the development of deeper interpersonal relationships, and a support group to which the delegates could turn when conflict emerged and staff were not available.

We designed the lab in four phases, with the staff assuming different roles in each.

Phase I T-Groups
The staff role in this phase was that of facilitator, with the subtle direction and enforcing of T-Group standards that the process requires. As always, there was a high degree of dependence upon the T-Group trainers. This was not avoided, because it suited our overall design, but neither was it encouraged.

Phase II Staff Oppression
The elements of the "system" began to operate and the staff was gradually revealed as "the establishment". It had special privileges. It withheld information. It subjected the delegates to petty harassments. It imposed a curfew. As pressure from "the establishment" escalated, delegate grumbling was "reasoned with" or ignored. A delegate group insisted on attending staff meetings, "to get more information about the overall direction of the lab." The coordinator suggested an alternative: he would meet with the delegate group at 10:00 p.m. They agreed – but he didn't show up.

In this early stage of Phase II, the sessions were continuing on schedule. The content was meaningful and useful for community change agents. The sessions were designed as independent units so that the staff would not have a high stake in slowing down the anticipated rebellion.

By the third session in Phase II, the delegates suspended the content session, insisting on a "community meeting" to iron out differences. The staff agreed, but took over the meeting and refused to agree to anything without a staff caucus. After a ten-minute private caucus, it returned and continued to caucus in "fishbowl". Delegate requests were never mentioned. The staff discussion did reflect the new value system, but also gave clear indications of staff self-interest.

Finally, the staff broke for coffee, declaring: "We will not return until you reach a consensus to invite us back."

Phase III Delegate Rebellion
In this phase, there was complete separation of staff and delegates (Us and Them). The delegates worked alone, trying to organize themselves and decide what they would do. Many still did not see themselves as victims of an oppressive establishment. Most did not see that the situation had moved from a trust to a power stance. They were confused. They felt *they* had done something wrong. They were angry that the lab wasn't "going anywhere". All this immobilized them.

After three hours, the delegates sent representatives to ask us if we would please return and if we would let them have a say in the decision-making process.

We countered: "Why should we share our power?" We gave them a written contract, with room for delegates' signatures, which said: "We, the undersigned, agree to abide by all decisions of the staff." One man crumpled it up and threw it in our faces. But another delegate smoothed it out and took it back to the others. For most, it was a reluctant rebellion.

After four more working hours, the delegates were still unable to reach unanimity, and none of the factions were willing to move until all the delegates united as a group. The delegates returned the contract unsigned and quit for the evening.

It should be noted that the staff was able to function in a dual capacity during Phase III. Although each staff member was a definite part of "the establishment", each was also available to work with delegates who were having trouble handling the intense feelings of frustration, anger, and conflict. Only four delegates needed special help in identifying and working through those feelings. Although the "game" had become real, both delegates and staff alike intuitively recognized that individual needs had top priority.

Phase IV Negotiation

In this phase, the delegates take over the lab, assume decision-making responsibility, and invite the staff in as consultants.

A leadership group of delegates jammed through a proposal that was immediately delivered to the staff. It said: "We demand that the staff return to work with us as part of the total community, or we will seek a healthier community elsewhere."

The staff responded: "We agree to share the responsibility for the rest of the lab, including the selection of content for the sessions, *if* 1) the delegates will allow us to derive learnings from this whole power exercise, and 2) we can return to the T-Groups right away, for one session."

The delegates agreed, with the understanding that the procedures for joint decision making would be worked out at a total-community negotiating session.

Note: We insisted on analyzing the entire event and on deriving learnings, because the delegates' difficulty in perceiving the power situation, in organizing themselves, and in seeing the need for demands and negotiation could only become clear as the situation and their behavior were carefully evaluated. The staff felt that the delegates' obvious inability to function in a power situation would provide additional impetus for them to work on skills and would also help them sharpen their learning objectives for the rest of the lab.

Note: We also insisted on the T-Group session in order to allow for the ventilation of feelings, and to clarify whether or not a support group is useful in a conflict situation.

In the negotiating session, after housekeeping and social life details were worked out, the staff proposed a priority-setting procedure through which the delegates would select the content for the rest of the sessions. After some clarification and a little resistance, the proposal was accepted. The staff was allowed to offer content items for consideration, but these were introduced late in the procedure.

The delegates were invited to participate in the designing of the sessions; however, since this was done from 10:00 p.m. until..., few did.

The topics the delegates finally selected were: 1) my personal values, perspective, and motives as a community development worker; 2) the role of the change agent; 3) how to motivate and organize people; 4) how to handle the minority viewpoint in a group; and 5) several items that are segments of the social change planning process.

Taking the social change planning process (No. 5) as a single design gave us a chance to re-practise the identifying and confronting of power while experiencing a planning model. The design took all day. The lab was divided into four groups with two staff members as process consultants for each group. The task was to gain access to supper. One group was given control of access to supper; however, no one – not even the staff – knew in advance who had this power. Three of the groups, including their consultants, would simply not get supper unless they "earned" it. How they could "earn" it would have to be negotiated with the "power" group. The staff/consultant role was to hold the groups to the planning process (e.g. each group should complete community analysis before it moves toward coalition and tactics). The staff/consultants would also take careful notes for an evaluation after the event.

The three powerless groups were unable or unwilling to think in terms of power. The event took eight hours. It wasn't until the sixth hour that the three groups communicated enough to discover who actually had the power. At that point, the powerless groups coalesced enough to occupy the dining room; but when they discovered that the cook had been "reached" and would feed no one without authorization, they were stymied. At 5:00 (supper had to be eaten between 5:30 and 6:00), some began to talk tactics based on the perceived self-interest of the power group. The coalition was nevertheless unable to put together a leadership group and unable to get anyone unglued from his chair. The power group literally had to beg the coalition to negotiate with them. At 5:29, negotiations were completed and everyone ate. The power group had had to give up its power. The victims were unable or unwilling to take it away.

As we analyzed the event and derived learnings, parallels between the delegates' behavior and that of victims out in society became clear. Much was learned about the nature of power and the resistance to challenging it; little was learned about the effective use of power.

The lab concluded with detailed work on back-home application and a final T-Group session to reinforce learnings at the feeling level.

Note: During the party on the last evening, when the staff were given symbolic gifts, I was presented with a real bullet-proof vest.

Conclusions

Treating the entire lab itself as a system gave a reality to the delegates' experience that designed exercises or even simula-

tion games could not. Each delegate was forced to face his (or her) ability to function in a struggle with authority. The struggle was real. It was not a role. Therefore, each delegate came to know his level of competence; little room was left for rationalization. As a professional (or experienced volunteer) community worker, the delegate's skills in organizing, forming coalitions, and perceiving power relationships were tested. He measured up... or he didn't..., with his strengths and weaknesses showing clearly. This enabled each delegate to get a clear fix on himself and to set precise learning objectives for the future.

However, there are drawbacks. First, the separation of delegates and staff cuts down on the sharing and learning that usually take place in the off-hours of a residential lab. Secondly, there is the risk that the delegates will be unable to cope with the conflict or the sense of being "betrayed" by the staff. Thirdly, deliberate manipulation, a hidden agenda, and betrayal of the delegates' trust runs counter to the usual training practice and is difficult for the staff to live with.

These disadvantages were considered before the staff committed itself to the design. The final decision to go with this systems/conflict design was withheld until the T-Group sessions gave us a clear reading of the delegates. We judged that the delegates could handle it. We felt then, and still feel, that the greater possibilities of learning justified the risk and its ramifications.

Roger W. Floyd
Reprinted from Social Change

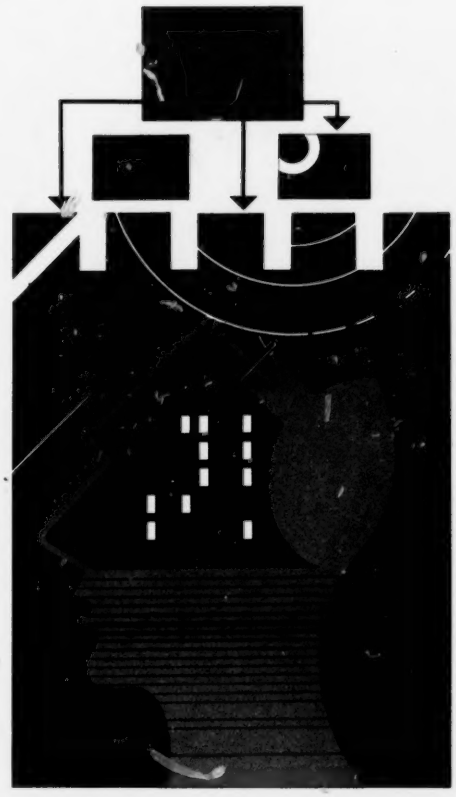


Illustration Wynn Medinger

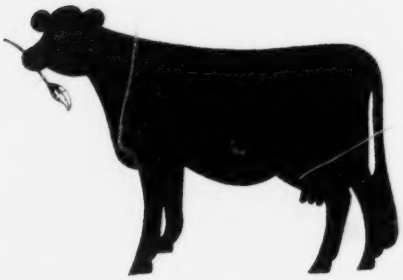
Despite all my good intentions, I have not managed to become bound by groups in the ward. Whether or not I do what they want, I know my pay cheque will still come from the City Treasurer, and that I will be able to say what I want in City Council. If I have given up any power to community groups, it has been done voluntarily: they have not seized it from myself, which would be the only way they could get it. On the other hand, enough strong people have emerged in the ward that Karl and I feel confident that if we make any serious errors, we will be strongly chastised. But even from this position it is a long way to one where local communities have the power as of right: where they can decide what sidewalks will be repaired, what planning work will be done, what can be developed, how the police will operate, all the other crucial matters which people want a real say in. That double-barrelled position – politicians being controlled by their constituents and people having the power to make decisions about community matters – is what I am striving for now. That would make me into a true agent for the community. I would be their delegate in the political forum.

Looking at the political situation across the city in this light, things do not seem hopeful. Most politicians play the old games of promising better decisions; but they never talk about the only way to get better decisions, which is to let neighborhood groups make them directly. A shift in power of that magnitude is not welcome to most aldermen. Taking decision-making away from politicians is rarely looked on with favor.

From
Up Against City Hall, by John Sewell
James Lewis and Samuel, Publishers

The Environment in Film

Pat Thorvaldson edits Pot Pourri *for the NFB distribution office in Toronto. A recent issue devoted to the environment in film contained these comments:*



"What we need is the ability to create alternatives, which is a very personal thing.

"That's why I would call Derek May's type of film an ecology film. His films show a mysterious interaction with things, the inseparability of man and nature, and man and man, in a setting that has an air of mystery that suggests there is something higher in life. They exemplify ecology in a non-ecological way. That's why I think film, to be of any value other than in a journalistic sense, should help you to cope with all the shit that's lying around. It shouldn't just tell you 'there's some more shit lying around'. Somehow it should work on you so that you personally, within your own tiny little sphere, are becoming a person suited to a world which must occur if we're going to survive. It wouldn't be a world of simple cause and effect. It would be a world of complex inter-relationships and inter-reactions – things all coming together, everything having to do with everything else. Our present human mentality hasn't seen it that way. It says this causes that. You have an oil spill. It causes dead birds. It doesn't see that everything has to do with everything. I think we have to learn that.

"We really have to begin to see ourselves as part of the world. The world is a whole province, and it's ours, and we have to learn to know more than just our tribal, nationalistic, and separate ideas. We are really so interdependent, and it's only by seeding ideas in all parts of the world that new ideas can grow properly. So it's necessary to go to other countries to make films, say, about the technological developments that really are forward instead of backward.

"The negative side of things was always stressed to me."

Bruce Mackay

"I'm sure you could talk to everybody in Canada and they'd all be interested in the good use of Man and Resources, but what good is it if I go around recycling a few bottles, if all the while the main thrust of my life is to support things as they are?

"Last week we were in Bathurst and someone suggested we could go and pick up the scrap paper in this particular area. Well, if that moves some people, fine. But meanwhile this big bloody mill is belching out garbage. I would much sooner spend my time nourishing and equipping myself to be in a society where that mill isn't working like that. When that time came, people might have a certain sense of involvement with each other. They wouldn't throw their beer bottles on the other guy's lawn. Then we wouldn't have to be finding ways to clean up the garbage. It would be done. I'm sure the Consumer Society has been useful in past centuries in a certain manner of thinking, but right now it doesn't seem to have any reality."

Gordon Martin

Similar thoughts come from an editorial in Manas, *a California weekly. From* Agenda for Tomorrow, *former Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, is quoted as saying:*

"To rebuild our cities with style and distinction will require interdisciplinary teams of architects, engineers, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, lawyers, and managers, bound together by a common commitment to the humanizing of the urban milieu."

But what (says *Manas*) if one of the first requirements of genuine renewal lies in recognizing that these labelled specialists don't know enough to plan so extensively for other people? Each of these professions has in it a handful of brilliant critics showing how blinded by the past the rank and file of its members are. Mr. Udall wants an awakened sense of public responsibility; to get it, it may be necessary to begin with a revival of private responsibility.

Consider this diagnosis, offered by Wendell Berry in his new book, *Continuing Harmony:*

"What we are up against in this country, in any attempt to invoke private responsibility, is that we have nearly destroyed private life. Our people have given up their independence in return for the cheap seductions and the shoddy merchandise of so-called 'affluence'. We have delegated all our vital functions and responsibilities to salesmen and agents and bureaus and experts of all sorts. We cannot feed or clothe ourselves, or entertain ourselves, or communicate with each other, or be charitable or neighborly or loving, or even respect ourselves, without recourse to a merchant or a corporation or a public-service organization or a style-setter or an expert...

"Our model citizen is a sophisticate who before puberty understands how to produce a baby, but who at the age of thirty will not know how to produce a potato...

"If we are to hope to correct our abuses of each other and of other races and of our land, and if our effort to correct these abuses is to be more than a political fad that will in the long run be only another form of abuse, then we are going to have to go far beyond public protest and political action. We are going to have to rebuild the substance and integrity of private life in this country. We are going to have to gather up the fragments of knowledge and responsibility that we have parcelled out to the bureaus and the corporations and the specialists, and we are going to have to put those fragments back together again in our own minds and in our families and households and neighborhoods. We need better government, no doubt about it. But we also need better minds, better friendships, better marriages, better communities. We need persons and households that do not have to wait on organizations, but can make the necessary changes in themselves, on their own."

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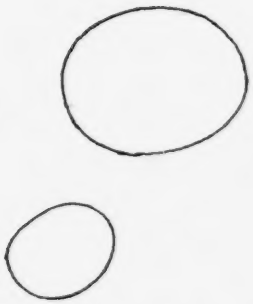
VTR in Cross-cultural Communication



French-Canadian youth have become more aware of themselves since the Church in Quebec entered its "révolution tranquille". Quebec's Jewish youth have begun to challenge their past alienation from Quebec's social, cultural and political systems, becoming more readily open to intercultural exchanges in order to explore inherited stereotypes of themselves and others. Henri Cohen and Steven Levy, two young men who were working with these groups, wondered if they could initiate an audio-visual system of communication wherein both groups, given their newly emerging values, could convey genuine feelings in order to break down traditional defence mechanisms that hamper profound rapprochement and sincere dialogue.

The Project:
Cross-cultural Communication

Each ethnic group consisted of five people. The Jewish group was entirely composed of university or college students, 19 to 21 years old. One was a Francophone Jew from Morocco, another was of orthodox tradition, and the balance did not possess any definite religious or political commitment, although they all identified themselves as part of the Jewish "nation".

The French-Canadian group was 20 to 24 years old, some students, some in permanent employment. All were aware of present problems confronting the Province although they did not feel directly implicated. However, they were all proud to be Québécois and were extremely interested to participate in the experiment. Most have either had past studies in (or are presently employed in) the field of audiovisual technique.

The Method

The goal of the animators was not to compromise unique and particular lifestyles, but to recognize and respect the legitimacy of each, hoping they might re-examine old stereotypes about the other group and bring their impressions closer to reality. In short, each group had to record their felt impressions and images vis-à-vis the other community, using a videotape recorder (VTR). The object was not a documentary but rather a subjective visual and auditory recording of their impressions as they saw them. Research was not recommended and the participants were free to choose situations and content from within the greater Montreal area.

In other words, the French Canadians had to record on videotape those perceptions they believed to be the predominent and the most visible characteristics of the Jewish milieu, and the Jewish Canadians, their perception of the French-Canadian milieu. Through VTR.they would reveal their inner feelings toward the other group.

From the beginning, it was apparent that the French Canadians were more enthusiastic about getting into the project than the Jewish Canadians. Both groups were initially somewhat reticent, and constantly sought the animators' involvement. Gradually they became more independent, finally assuming control as personalities and roles developed.

Short-term Results

What evolved demonstrated unique differences in carrying out the task, as well as different video styles. First, there was planning, then the actual shooting occurred, and finally the end product was put together. During the second phase of the project there were four formal meetings plus several sub-group planning sessions and shootings.

Contents of the French Group

The video revealed pictures of Chassids (orthodox Jews) and older people leaving a synagogue. Large Jewish institutions and enterprises were dwelt upon. Finally, the project participants role-played two "typical" French-Canadian women who were openly anti-Semitic and prejudiced, rendering their impressions of Jews, involving the stereotype of "Rich Jew", "Jewish Merchant", etc. This skit ended with the two women anxious to escape from the Jewish environment by deciding to go to various cultural representations being conducted by or featuring Jewish artists – conveying the idea, that it is difficult to escape Jewish influence.

Contents of the Jewish Group

The Jewish group's tape consisted of street scenes in French districts, highlighting poverty, church, caisses populaires, hockey, beer bottles and simple downtown images of French life. It appeared that the French group was surrounded by a larger English community,

rather than seeing the reality and opposite situation.

Over the pictures was dubbed in commentary on French-Canadian mentality, attitudes and cosmology, as the Jewish students saw it. Generally the comments and the pictures were not coordinated.

Techniques

Although no structure was defined, it appeared that the French group evolved a more romantic, more dramatic tape; while the Jewish group developed a more rational, factual, quasi-objective documentary. While the former participated, the latter commentated. Both groups saw the importance of the other's institutions in the development and the perpetuation of community, although many times the institutional life was misinterpreted. The Jewish students expressed ideas intellectually, searching for facts, while the French group attempted to assume the roles of people who are prejudicial, and they pushed the stereotype to the extreme by using dramatic subjective involvement.

Reaction of the Groups to the Tapes

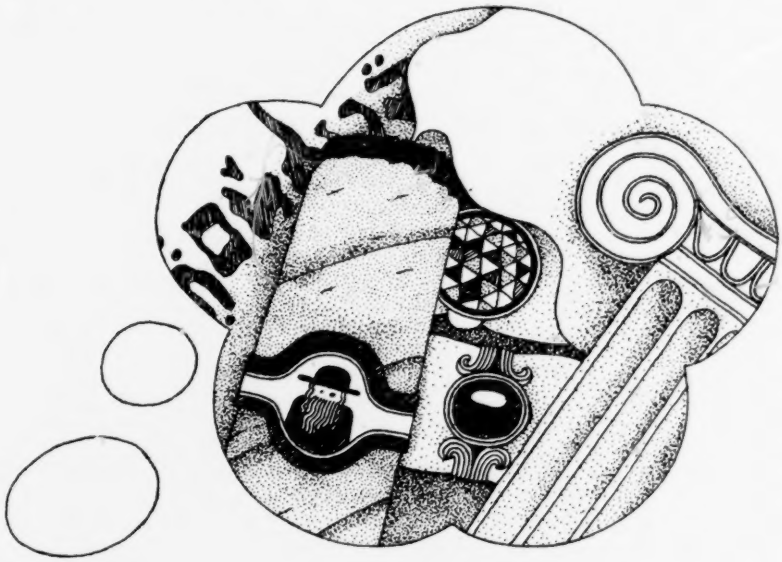
Both groups reacted strongly by laughing and joking as they viewed the tapes. Following this initial reaction, everyone entered into an open discussion of the tapes and soon began to exchange personal feelings. A high level of trust and even some intergroup bonds were established. There was agreement to continue discussion on formal and informal levels.

In the final session there was more rapport and even anxiety about separation after the project. This led to a commitment by the group to continue meeting.

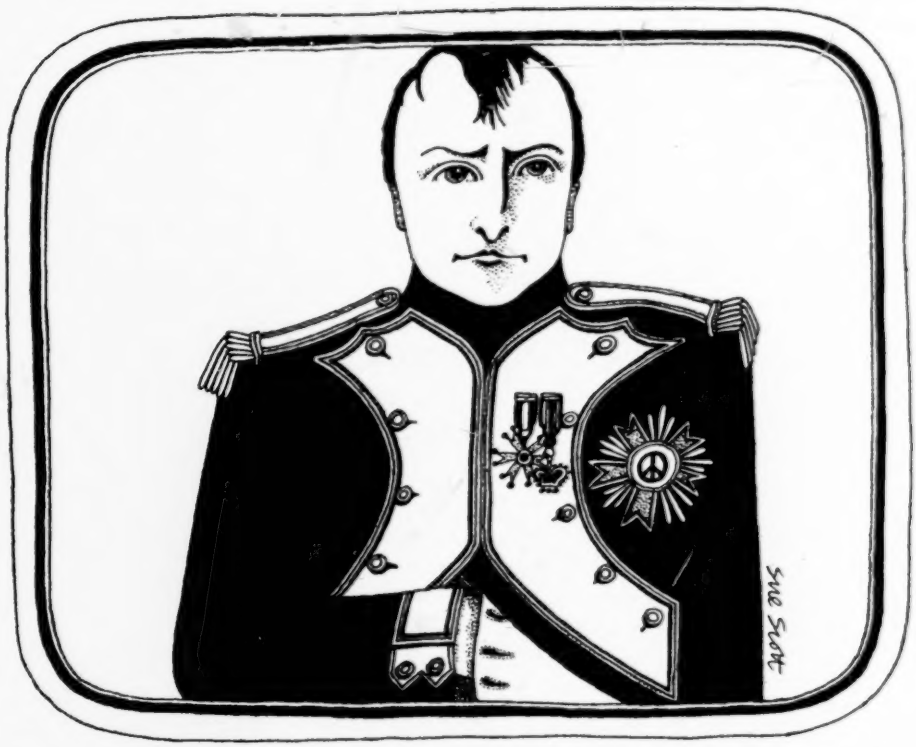
Conclusions

By being involved in different milieu, the individuals gained a broader perspective and alternative points of view in relation to their own cultural horizons. This project contributed towards clarifying, erasing or confirming stereotypes and attitudes but was based on a real exchange in place of "inherited" emotions.

Within the Quebec milieu, different cultural groups have their own communication networks, making it very difficult to establish dialogue. The VTR group method helped two small groups surmount this barrier, leading to more significant and creative communication.



Videotaping History



There is a great deal of apathy present in our education system. The traditional approach to teaching the two compulsory courses, History and English, can be blamed for much of this disinterest.

Shortly after Christmas, the teacher decided to apply a new method to his academic grade eleven "European History" courses. When he discussed the problem with his students, some members of the class suggested that it would be fun to make a movie. More practical to our purposes was the preparation of half-hour documentaries on certain units of grade eleven History. Another practicality was the use of half-inch videotape. This type of equipment held several advantages over the use of film: it could be used over and over again; mistakes could be immediately and easily corrected; the results could be viewed as the shooting was proceeding. This was very important, in that the students saw what they were creating from the start, and the enthusiasm remained high instead of abating. However, there was one major drawback to the use of half-inch video: we didn't have the equipment, and borrowing was to put many limitations on us before we even started. Fortunately, this did not dampen our zeal for this endeavor and we were able to acquire the necessary equipment from the National Film Board for the duration of two days per take. We were ready to start the preparations for the documentaries. Here we met another obstacle. We had to have the documentaries, including scenery, skits, costumes, music, sound, etc., completely ready for the first week of April because that was the date agreed upon for the use of the equipment.

Having five History classes, the course was divided into five separate units:

1 The French Revolution Era
2 The Napoleonic Era
3 The Bismark Period
4 World War I
5 World War II

The first thing necessary to do any type of play or documentary is the proper research material. To obtain these resources, the students went into the Dalhousie Library, borrowed close to two hundred books and brought them back to Sydney Stephen High for about a month. Each class, now broken up into groups, researched in class and began to write their documentaries. Because of the shortness of time, many students contributed their free time in the hope that the documentaries would be finished on schedule.

When each group had finished their particular section, we met as a class and put the final product together. When the scripts had been typed on stencil and run off on the duplication machines (all done by the students), they were given to the students. As soon as the scripts were in their hands their enthusiasm really began to rise because they could see what they had accomplished.

Each class was then broken up into new groups – director, costumes, sound, editing, etc.

Again, during class time the students prepared the sound. They brought in records which they recorded on a tape in the proper order. They acquired costumes from such places as the Neptune Theater and the Armouries.

Certain members of all five classes came back to view and tape various parts of films on the different units. This was done voluntarily over March Break.

Finally, after much rehearsing and refining of details after school, we were ready to use the equipment.

Underestimating the time factor, we arranged for the five classes to be free from other obligations for only one day per take. Despite the fact that students eagerly stayed till midnight or 1:30 in the morning, we managed to complete only one documentary. In the following month, by borrowing equipment from various sources such as the Dalhousie Education Department and Teled Video Services, we were able to complete two more documentaries. The remaining two have almost reached completion but demand still more work, which unfortunately has to be put off until we gain access to equipment again.

We firmly believe that even if none of the documentaries had been completed, a great deal was gained. The main advantage of finishing the projects was to prevent disappointment on the part of the students. The method used was to enable

students to teach themselves how to study History while they were learning their particular section. As you know, people rarely learn from what they are told. They have to learn from experience. This worked very well because the students learned how to pick out the relevant facts and to present them in a precise and chronological manner, relating them to present-day circumstances as much as possible.

Is this not the essence of a History course: to teach one to relate past historical occurrences to present-day events so that one may understand why their present environment is as it is?

This undertaking was equally good, apart from its historical value. The students learned a great deal about film production, use of tapes and cameras, and how to unify numerous small sections into a synchronized audio-video-musical whole. They also learned from experience to be more or less critical of TV programs, knowing now what is involved in the making of them. The best aspect of this project was simply that the students were really keen, as was demonstrated by their participation. As one student remarked, "I would not be caught dead in the school at 10.30 p.m. for a lecture." But he was there for the documentary. Some of the poorest students under the lecture method took a very active part in the making of the documentaries, showing great creative abilities of which they themselves were probably not aware. This could conceivably have opened new horizons for some students' futures.

In short, the use of half-inch video was basically the catalyst that changed the passive recipient of information into an eager and active participant. Needless to say, the implementation of videotape equipment in both secondary and elementary schools would be a great benefit to the education system.

Doug Hill and Maureen Gowanloch
Sydney Stephen High School
Bedford, N.S.

MOVE in Halifax (a coalition of 45 self-help organizations) has gone into print. They are producing a lively newsletter at low cost to keep the community and key city power figures aware of the activities of the groups. Some members were initially reluctant to participate – couldn't see the point. Now, after three months, more of them are contributing items. Booklets on such themes as "unemployment insurance in laymen's language" are in the planning stage.

With so many groups cooperating, and the knowledge of one or two media people, it is possible to invest in sufficient equipment to produce interesting, inexpensive print materials that are useful and readable. MOVE is anxious to hear from other groups, particularly coalitions who are going into print, or are already there.

Write them at Box 992, Halifax.

If you are receiving this publication for the first time without having asked to be on the mailing list, it is probably because someone told us you might be interested. You can receive future issues for the asking by sending us your name, address and postal zone.

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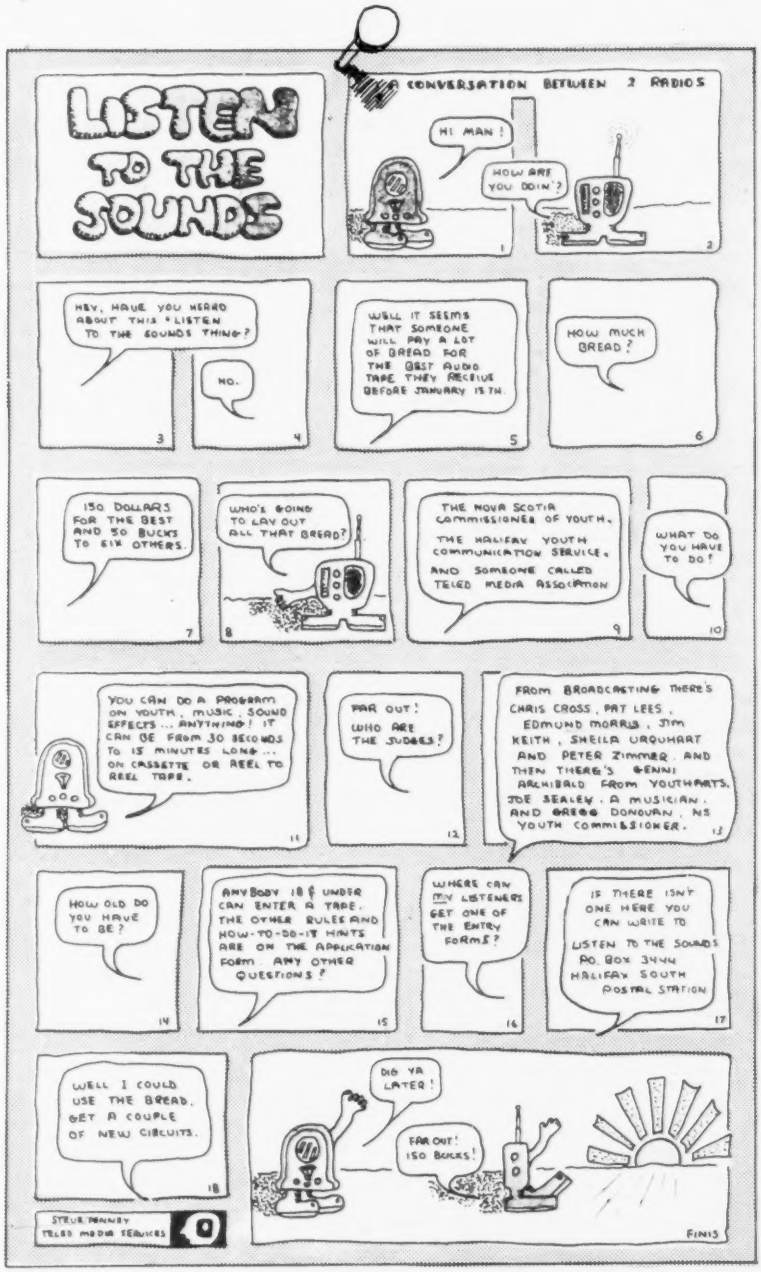
LISTEN TO THE SOUNDS
A CONVERSATION BETWEEN 2 RADIOS
HI MAN!
HOW ARE YOU DOIN'?
HEY, HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THIS "LISTEN TO THE SOUNDS THING?
NO.
WELL IT SEEMS THAT SOMEONE WILL PAY A LOT OF BREAD FOR THE BEST AUDIO TAPE THEY RECEIVE BEFORE JANUARY 15TH.
HOW MUCH BREAD?
150 DOLLARS FOR THE BEST AND 50 BUCKS TO SIX OTHERS.
WHO'S GOING TO LAY OUT ALL THAT BREAD?
THE NOVA SCOTIA COMMISSIONER OF YOUTH, THE HALIFAX YOUTH COMMUNICATION SERVICE, AND SOMEONE CALLED TELED MEDIA ASSOCIATION
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO?
YOU CAN DO A PROGRAM ON YOUTH, MUSIC, SOUND EFFECTS... ANYTHING! IT CAN BE FROM 30 SECONDS TO 15 MINUTES LONG... ON CASSETTE OR REEL TO REEL TAPE.
FAR OUT! WHO ARE THE JUDGES?
FROM BROADCASTING THERE'S CHRIS CROSS, PAT LEES, EDMUND MORRIS, JIM KEITH, SHEILA URQUHART AND PETER ZIMMER. AND THEN THERE'S GENNI ARCHIBALD FROM YOUTHARTS, JOE SEALEY, A MUSICIAN, AND GREGG DONOVAN, NS YOUTH COMMISSIONER.
HOW OLD DO YOU HAVE TO BE?
ANYBODY 18 & UNDER CAN ENTER A TAPE. THE OTHER RULES AND HOW-TO-DO-IT HINTS ARE ON THE APPLICATION FORM. ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?
WHERE CAN MY LISTENERS GET ONE OF THE ENTRY FORMS?
IF THERE ISN'T ONE HERE YOU CAN WRITE TO LISTEN TO THE SOUNDS P.O. BOX 3444 HALIFAX SOUTH POSTAL STATION
WELL I COULD USE THE BREAD. GET A COUPLE OF NEW CIRCUITS.
DIG YA LATER!
FAR OUT! 150 BUCKS!
STEVE MANBY TELED MEDIA SERVICES
FINIS

Here is a poster prepared by TELED Media Services, Halifax, to promote a contest in which they were co-sponsors. They also made up cartoon fliers with contest rules on the back, application form at the bottom.

If you'd like more information, TELED can be reached at P.O. Box 3444, South Halifax, N.S.

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